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Conservatori vs. Conservatoire: **The Neapolitan *Partimento* Tradition and the *Méthodes* of the Paris Conservatoire** **at the Turn of the 19th Century**

ABSTRACT

Background

In 1795 the Conservatoire was founded with the post-revolutionary aim to build a national French school of music, based on the French musical practice, and able to compete with similar institutions in Europe. But did this really happen? The fame of the Neapolitan School and its *Maestri* was well established at that time. Their practice-based teaching method (which involved *Partimenti* and *Solfeggi*) had proven to be very effective. Were the teachers at the Conservatoire influenced by this at the time well-known practice? Several Neapolitan musicians were working in Paris at the turn of the nineteenth century. Many of them fled after the failure of the Neapolitan Republic of 1799. Emanuele Imbimbo was the editor of two editions of *Partimenti* by Fedele Fenaroli that were printed in Paris at the press of Raffaele Carli, another Neapolitan living in Paris. Honoré Langlé, one of the founders of the *Conservatoire* in Paris, was a former student of Pasquale Cafaro. Vincenzo Flocchi, a student of Fedele Fenaroli, worked with Alexandre Choron on the *Principes d'accompagnement des écoles d'Italie*; Florido Tomeoni wrote a *méthode* and a treatise ‘selon les principes de l'école de Naples’; Jean-Joseph Rodolphe, who studied in Parma with Traetta and later composition with the Neapolitan *Maestro* Niccolò Jommelli, was teacher of *Solfège* at the *Ecole de chant et de declamation* and later at the *Conservatoire*; and, of course, the well-known Paisiello, Piccinni and Zingarelli were famous for their Operas and singing lessons in the *ville lumière*.

Partimento studies is a flowering branch of historical music theory. The relationship between Paris and Naples, however, is largely unexplored. The reference work about *Partimento* is to be found in Sanguinetti (2012), while one of the sources of information on the history of the *Conservatoire* is to be identified in Bongrain and Poirier (1999). Concerning the exchanges between Naples and Paris, the recent discoveries of Cafiero (2016) will be taken into consideration.

Aims and Repertoire Studied

The main goal of this research is to examine whether and how far the Neapolitan *Partimento* tradition influenced French music pedagogy and music theory in the first years of the 19th century. The present study focuses on the first years of the *Conservatoire* through an analytical reading of its *Méthodes* and teaching material in comparison to Neapolitan sources of

Regole and *Partimenti* (e.g., Fenaroli, Durante). In 1794, the teachers at the Conservatoire were required to produce their own didactical material that will result in twelve *Méthodes* for the main subjects taught. The aim of this project was to unify and simplify the contents of all lessons.

The *Méthodes* taken in examination for my research are: *Principes élémentaires de musique* and its second volume, *Solfèges pour servir à l'étude dans le Conservatoire de musique*; and the *Traité d'Harmonie* by Catel. Nevertheless, the *Méthodes*, created to contain all musical knowledge, were not the only didactical material used by professors at the *Conservatoire*. There are records of the *Conservatoire* buying in 1819 copies of Italian *solfeggi* and Fenaroli's *bassi*.

Many Italian sources, though, were published by Alexandre Étienne Choron (1771–1834) who was in charge of rebuilding the *Maîtrises de Cathédrales*.

A different approach on the use of *partimenti* comes from Cherubini, one of the founders of the conservatoire, teacher of composition and director of the institution from 1822 to 1842.

During the ‘Cherubini era’, lessons of harmony and accompaniment play an important role in the teaching at the *Conservatoire*. Cherubini studied in Bologna with Giuseppe Sarti who, according to Fétis, used Durante and Leo exercises during his lessons. Cherubini left a considerable number of *basses chiffrées*, exercises that are very similar to *partimenti*.

Methods

Partimento and schemata theory are the main tools employed to approach the critical comparison of the French Methods with the practice-oriented sources used in Naples. Special attention is given to musical examples and assignments (when available).

Implications

The first results of a three-year research in progress — *Creating the Neapolitan Canon* at the Hochschule der Künste Bern, Switzerland (2016–2019) — were presented at the conference. It seems clear at the moment that some similarities are to be found in the teaching methods at the Paris *Conservatoire* and in the *Partimento* sources. The lack of written *Partimento* rules also raises interesting interpretation and translation issues in the terminology and musical symbols used, but also in the employment of this technique: mere accompaniment lessons in France, accompaniment and composition exercises in Italy.

Keywords

Music Pedagogy, Harmony, Partimento, Conservatoire.

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